

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-5, 10-17, 19, 20 and 24 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Young et al. in view of Giddings; Claims 8, 18 and 21-23 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Young et al. in view of Giddings and further in view of Christel et al.; and Claims 1, 3, 4, 8, 12-14, 17-19 and 21-24 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Christel et al. in view of Giddings. Claims 25-33 have now been canceled, without prejudice, and thus, Claims 1-5, 8 and 10-24 remain active.

The discussion granted by Examiner Leung is hereby acknowledged and is sincerely appreciated. During this discussion, the prior art of record was discussed, including in particular the teachings and disclosure of Young et al., Giddings and Christel et al. The Examiner concluded that while these suggested amendments to the claims presented during the discussion were helpful, the introduction of additional limitations would be even more helpful in clearly defining over the prior art. In view of this, Applicants note that the embodiments shown in Figure 8(c), as discussed below, also discloses the fact that the continuous partition wall portion in the vicinity of the confluent portion is connected thereto and that the continuous partition wall of the vicinity of branch portion is connected thereto, as discussed in page 26, lines 7-26. By comparison, Young et al. show partitions 200 in Figure 4 thereof, for example, but such are not disclosed as being continuous to a confluent portion or branch portion. Moreover, Giddings does not teach this and insofar as the splitter member 15C and any additional splitters shown, for example, in Figure 1-7 are not continuous with respect to either a confluent portion or continuous to a branch portion and, moreover, are not connected thereto as presently claimed. With respect to Christels et al. it is noted that while

an extension of the confluent portion is shown in Figure 2, there is no teaching of a continuous well portion in the vicinity of a branch portion nor is any such continuous partition connected thereto, as presently claimed. Furthermore, Christels et al. does not teach the utilization of a partition wall as presently claimed in combination with the additional plurality of walls which extends in a line parallel to flow path of the fine channel, as presently claimed. In view of the foregoing, and the above-noted deficiencies in the prior art, it is submitted that Claims 1 and 24 is now amended to include the limitations mentioned above and merit an indication of allowability.

Considering then the rejection of Claims 1-5, 10-17, 19, 20 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Young et al. in view of Giddings; the rejection of Claims 8, 18 and 21-23 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Young et al. in view of Giddings and further in view of Christel et al.; and the rejection of Claims 1, 3, 4, 8, 12-14, 17-19 and 21-24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Christel et al. in view of Giddings, it is to be noted that each of independent Claims 1 and 24 have now been amended to include the limitation that continuous partition walls are positioned in the vicinity of the confluent portion and in the vicinity of the branch portion of the fine channel. The advantages of this feature are as explained in detail at page 26, lines 7-26 wherein it is stated that, in preferable embodiment, longer partition walls are formed in the vicinity of the confluent portion and the branch portion as shown in Fig. 8(c). Thus, by providing a continuous partition wall in the vicinity of the confluent portion and which is connected thereto, mixing between adjacent flows of fluid by mutual contact can be minimized and, by providing a continuous partition wall in the vicinity of the branch portion which is connected thereto, mutual contamination between adjacent flows of fluid caused by separation suddenly of the adjacent flows of the fluid can also be minimized.

A review of each of the above-noted references indicates that none of the same teach or disclose the limitations now added to each of Claims 1 and 24. More particularly, none of the above-noted references, nor any of the remaining references or record, utilize the structure now claimed and do not teach any other equivalent structure which provides the advantages provided by the present invention.

Applicants further note that based upon the dependency of Claims 2-23 from Claim 1, such claims also merit indication of allowability.

In view of the foregoing, an early and favorable Office Action is believed to be in order and the same is hereby respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

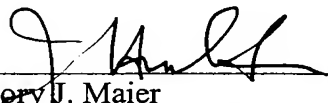
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